

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
NR-ELIGIBILITY REVIEW FORM**

PROPERTY NAME: Thomas Town Survey District

INVENTORY NO. CAR-351

ADDRESS: Multiple

OWNER: Multiple

TAX PARCEL NUMBER: Multiple

TAX MAP NUMBER: 24

PROJECT: MD 404 from US Route 50 to Denton Bypass

AGENCY: MD SHA

SITE VISIT BY: Archaeological and Historical Consultants, Inc.

NAME: Leslie Dyer

DATE: August 2001

ELIGIBILITY RECOMMENDED

ELIGIBILITY NOT RECOMMENDED X

CRITERIA: A; B; C; D

CONSIDERATIONS: A; B; C; D; E; F; G; NONE

IS PROPERTY LOCATED WITHIN AN HISTORIC DISTRICT?

YES;

NO

IS DISTRICT LISTED?

YES;

NO

NAME OF DISTRICT:

DOCUMENTATION ON THE PROPERTY/DISTRICT IS PRESENTED IN:

DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY AND ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION:

Summary Description:

Thomas Town is a small nineteenth-and early twentieth-century African American village located in western Caroline County. It consists of a small group of houses, churches, and an old schoolhouse located on the north and south sides of Hillsboro Road, many of which are no longer in use. Although historically there were more than two dozen households, only nine historic dwellings are left in the small rural community (US Census 1910). The oldest dwellings are side-gabled, two-story frame houses with two or three bays and the early twentieth-century dwellings are small, front-gabled, one-story houses. Foundations are constructed of brick or concrete block. The dwellings have asbestos-shingle, aluminum, or vinyl siding. Windows are a mixture of six-over-six and two-over-two styles, and many dwellings have replacement windows. Modern dwellings are interspersed between the historic houses and are mostly one-story ranch or pre-fabricated houses. Thomas Town has had at least two churches, both of which currently have active congregations.

Significance:

A 1910 U.S. Census record indicates that over two-dozen African American households resided in Thomas Town. Its population is now less than half of what it was at the beginning of the twentieth century, and many of its dwellings and structures have been abandoned or removed. Thomas Town is one of several Eastern Shore African American settlements, some of which, including Talbot County's Copperville, have been extensively documented. Thomas Town is interesting for its proximity to Hillsboro and for its connection with the surrounding agricultural properties; however, little written historical information is available, and its few native residents acknowledge that most information about Thomas Town was lost with the passing of its senior residents. The small African American settlement has not retained the majority of its dwellings and the construction of a substantial number of late twentieth-century houses has adversely affected the integrity of its historic setting. Thomas Town is therefore not recommended eligible to the National Register of Historic Places under any criterion.

PREPARED BY: Leslie Dyer, Principal Investigator, Archaeological and Historical Consultants, Inc.

Maryland Historical Trust Review

Eligibility recommended

Eligibility not recommended: X

Criteria: A; B; C; D **Considerations:** A; B; C; D; E; F; G; None

Comments:

Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

Andrew Lewis

Date

09/25/01

Reviewer, NR program

E. Kuntz

Date

9/27/01

✓-entered

**CAROLINE COUNTY
HISTORIC SITE SUMMARY SHEET**

SURVEY NO.: CAR-351

NAME: Thomas Town Survey District

LOCATION: Thomas Town, Maryland

DATE: c. 1880-1950

ACCESS: Private

DESCRIPTION:

Thomas Town is a small nineteenth-and early twentieth-century African American village located in western Caroline County. It consists of a small group of houses, churches, and an old schoolhouse located on the north and south sides of Hillsboro Road, many of which are no longer in use. Although historically there were more than two dozen households, only nine historic dwellings are left in the small rural community (US Census 1910). The oldest dwellings are side-gabled, two-story frame houses with two or three bays and the early twentieth-century dwellings are small, front-gabled, one-story houses. Foundations are constructed of brick or concrete block. The dwellings have asbestos-shingle, aluminum, or vinyl siding. Windows are a mixture of six-over-six and two-over-two styles, and many dwellings have replacement windows. Modern dwellings are interspersed between the historic houses and are mostly one-story ranch or pre-fabricated houses. Thomas Town has had at least two churches, both of which currently have active congregations.

SIGNIFICANCE:

A 1910 U.S. Census record indicates that over two-dozen African American households resided in Thomas Town. It's population is now less than half of what it was at the beginning of the twentieth century, and many of its dwellings and structures have been abandoned or removed. Thomas Town is one of several Eastern Shore African American settlements, some of which, including Talbot County's Copperville, have been extensively documented. Thomas Town is interesting for its proximity to Hillsboro and for its connection with the surrounding agricultural properties; however, little written historical information is available, and its few native residents acknowledge that most information about Thomas Town was lost with the passing of its senior residents. The small African American settlement has not retained the majority of its dwellings and the construction of a substantial number of late twentieth-century houses has adversely affected the integrity of its historic setting. Thomas Town is therefore not recommended eligible to the National Register of Historic Places under any criterion.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. CAR-351

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic	Thomas Town
other	

2. Location

street and number	multiple	n/a	not for publication
city, town	Thomas Town	vicinity	
county	Caroline		

3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name	multiple			
street and number		telephone	n/a	
city, town	various	state	various	zip code

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.	tax map and parcel	map 24	
city, town	Denton	liber	various folio various

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- Contributing Resource in National Register District
- Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
- Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Recorded by HABS/HAER
- Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT
- Other:

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function		Resource Count	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture	8	12
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion		buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> domestic	<input type="checkbox"/> social		sites
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		structures
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	8	objects
		<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> unknown		Total
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care	<input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use		
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> other:		
				Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory	
				0	

7. Description

Inventory No. CAR-351

Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Thomas Town is a small nineteenth- and early twentieth-century African American village located in western Caroline County near the incorporated town of Hillsboro. Thomas Town consists of a small group of houses, churches, and an old schoolhouse located on the north and south sides of Hillsboro Road, many of which are no longer in use. Although historically there were more than two dozen households, only nine historic dwellings are left in the small rural community (US Census 1910). A Thomas Town native reported that an area along and north of present-day Maryland Route 404 was also once a part of Thomas Town. This area is presently dominated by modern residences and businesses and is no longer considered a part of Thomas Town (Wayman 2001).

Thomas Town appears to have consisted only of residences, churches, and a school, and never had industrial or commercial elements (Wayman 2001). The houses are late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century dwellings with few outbuildings. One property may have had several agricultural outbuildings, of which none remain. The Thomas Town properties are generally located on small lots which abut agricultural lands historically associated with the Rochester and Dr. Hackett farms, much of which are now owned by the State of Maryland (Saulsbury 1897; Maryland Dept. of Assessments and Taxation 2001).

The oldest dwellings are side-gabled, two-story frame houses with two or three bays. Two dwellings are small, front-gabled, one-story houses with three bays and a single window beneath the roofline on the façade. One dwelling on the north side of Hillsboro Road is a double-pile, one-story, side-gabled house with three bays (photo 3). Caroline County tax records indicate this house was built in 1920, and it was likely built during the height of the county's cannery economy. The older houses have brick foundations and the early twentieth-century dwellings generally have concrete block foundations. Many of the Thomas Town dwellings have asbestos-shingle siding, and a few have exteriors with aluminum and vinyl siding. Windows are a mixture of six-over-six and two-over-two styles, and a number of the houses have new vinyl and metal replacement windows. One house (photo 5) has upper-story wood-sash windows with a three-over-three glaze pattern, and are situated in a manner which suggests the dwelling's roof also serves as a ceiling for its second floor. A few of the dwellings have metal roofs, but most have modern asphalt shingles. Modern dwellings are interspersed between the historic houses and, except for a brick split-level house, are one-story ranch or pre-fabricated houses.

Thomas Town has had at least two churches, both of which currently have active congregations. The Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.) of Thomas Town is the oldest active church and appears on an 1897 map of Caroline County (Saulsbury 1897). The church was previously known as the Bethel A.M.E. church and celebrates its hundredth anniversary in 2002 (Wayman 2001). Mrs. Thelma Wayman, a native of Thomas Town and member of the Allen A.M.E. church reported that it was built on the site of two earlier churches which burned. Early twentieth-century topographic maps show two churches on the south side of Hillsboro Road, one of which was the A.M.E. church (USGS 1905). The United Church of Lord Jesus Christ, however, is a mid-twentieth-century building which does not appear on twentieth-century topographic maps.

The A.M.E. church is a front-gabled building consisting of two older sections with a modern addition connecting them. Like most of the early Eastern Shore buildings, the oldest section of the A.M.E. church has a brick foundation. Most of the A.M.E. Church's exterior components, however, have been replaced or covered with modern materials. The United Church of Lord Jesus Christ is primarily a concrete block structure with a white stucco exterior. Like the A.M.E. church, it is a front-gabled building. The church was constructed in a telescopic style, such that the smallest section is closest to the road, and two increasingly taller front-gabled components are situated towards the rear of the lot. A smaller front-gabled building is located to the west of the church and is presumably a social hall associated with the church. It is a one-story concrete block structure with a stucco surface on the south elevation only.

Thomas Town's only school was probably built around the turn-of-the-century. Thomas Town native Thelma Wayman recalls attending the school in the early 1930s until it was closed in 1936. Wayman also recalled that her older siblings attended the school in the 1920s and at that time it had been in use for many years. The front-gabled, two-story schoolhouse is completely covered in thick vines and only the metal roof and brick chimney are visible.

8. Significance

Inventory No. CAR-351

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

Specific dates 1880-1950

Architect/Builder unknown

Construction dates 1880-1950

Evaluation for:

☒ National Register☐ Maryland Register☐ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

Significance

Thomas Town is a late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century African American settlement in western Caroline County. A 1910 U.S. Census record indicates that over two-dozen African American households resided there. Thomas Town's population is less than half of what it was at the beginning of the twentieth century, and many of its dwellings and structures have been abandoned or removed. The majority of its current residents are still African American, only a few of whom have connections to the town's late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century occupants. Thomas Town is one of several Eastern Shore African American settlements, some of which, including Talbot County's Copperville, have been extensively documented. Thomas Town is interesting for its proximity to Hillsboro and for its connection with the surrounding agricultural properties; however, little written historical information is available, and its few native residents acknowledge that most information about Thomas Town was lost with the passing of its senior residents. Additionally, unlike Hillsboro and the neighboring farms, the small African American settlement has not retained the majority of its dwellings and the construction of a substantial number of late twentieth-century houses has adversely affected the integrity of its historic setting. Thomas Town is therefore not recommended eligible to the National Register of Historic Places under any criterion.

Historic Narrative

An 1875 map shows the location of rural western Caroline County structures in the vicinity of Hillsborough (currently known as Hillsboro), most of which are probably farms (Isler 1875). East of Hillsboro, Dr. Hackett, J. Wilkinson, and F. Ringold had dwellings and probably raised grain crops such as corn, oats, and wheat. An unnamed property and dwelling on the north side of the Hillsboro Road is possibly the oldest structure in Thomas Town, although it likely preceded the establishment of the African American settlement. An 1860 census reports the presence of many African American households in the Hillsboro area, suggesting that small enclaves of African Americans existed around the perimeter of principally white towns (Wright 1973). A native of Thomas Town reported that it was named for a prominent African American family, but thought the settlement was probably in existence before it first appears on an 1897 map of Caroline County.

A Talbot County man's account of life on Maryland's Eastern Shore suggests that Caroline County's late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century African Americans were probably farm and mill laborers and construction workers (Krech 1981). Many were probably former slaves or children or grand children of slaves. Like Talbot County, Caroline County had a few wealthy land owners, numerous white farm tenants, and a population of "poor blacks at the base of a rigid and brutal stratification system" (Krech 1981). Thomas Town's early residents worked on the region's farms, in canneries, and in local sawmills, and the women often performed "domestic work" for Hillsboro area families (Wayman 2001). To supplement their income and dietary needs, the town's residents likely had small gardens, chickens and small livestock, and collected berries and hunted small animals. The farms significantly controlled their working and personal lives, requiring strenuous labor from February until late fall. Many African Americans were engaged in wood cutting during the winter months, supplying the region with wood with which to heat private dwellings and municipal buildings.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. CAR-351

Thomas Town Survey District Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 1

Historic Narrative (continued)

Maryland's eastern shore towns were connected by a network of county and farm roads, the condition of which limited efficient travel. The addition of the Maryland and Delaware Railroad's line in 1868 and the Queen Annes Railroad in 1896 improved the eastern shore's ability to transport farm goods to growing urban areas to the west.

Railroads provided the region with a viable option for the transportation of fresh produce; however, advances in the technology of the food canning process enabled Queen Annes, Caroline, and Talbot Counties to provide agricultural products with a longer shelf life. A history of eastern Maryland canneries identified five different canneries in nearby Hillsboro between 1897 and 1955, with many more in the surrounding area (Burton 1986). Caroline, Queen Anne, and Talbot Counties were an ideal locale for grain crops, and many of the canneries in the region were known for canning creamed corn (Burton 1986). Production of canneries peaked in 1920 with subsequent decline during the mid- and latter twentieth century. The residents of Thomas Town provided a source of labor for the canneries, and one resident recalled her employment in a cannery as a teenager during the 1960s or 1970s (Farrow 2001).

Thomas Town's population has steadily declined during the last part of the twentieth century. Many of the property owners have relocated to larger east coast cities in Delaware, New York, and Maryland, putting their houses up for sale or leaving with no intention of returning. By contrast, the last two decades have seen a rise in sprawl along main corridors to nearby beaches. As a result, convenience stores and expedient housing such as prefabricated homes are increasingly common. What was originally Thomas Town's northern half along Maryland Route 404 is now occupied by newer housing for non-African Americans and service facilities such as a veterinary clinic.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. CAR-351

Burton, R. Lee Jr.
1986 *Canneries of the Eastern Shore*. Tidewater Publishers, Centreville, Maryland.

Conversation with Viola A. Farrow, July 2001.

Isler
1875 *Map of Caroline County, Maryland*.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property	approx 10 acres	
Acreage of historical setting	unknown	
Quadrangle name	Ridgely, MD (1973)	Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

n/a

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Leslie Dyer / Principal Investigator		
organization	Archeaological & Historical Consultants, Inc.	date	August 2001
street & number	101 N. Pennsylvania Ave., PO Box 482	telephone	(814) 364-2135
city or town	Centre Hall	state	PA

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. CAR-351

Thomas Town Survey District Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 1

Bibliography (continued)

Krech, Shepard III.
1981 Schenkman Publishing Company. Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation (n.d.) Real Property System (online). [Internet]. <http://www.dat.state.md.us>.
(Accessed July 2001).

Saulsbury, M. L.
1897 *Map of Caroline County, Maryland*. Drafted by M. L. Saulsbury, Civil Engineer, Ridgely, MD. Traced and copied by
George Herbert Foster, Denton, Maryland 1969.

United States Census
1910 *Caroline County, Maryland*.

United States Geological Survey (USGS)
1905 Denton Topographic Quadrangle, 7.5' series.

Conversation with Thelma Wayman, August 8, 2001.

Wright, Edward F.
1973 *Caroline County 1860 Census*. Research material compiled and copyrighted by F. Edward Wright. Printed in Puerto Rico.

**PRESERVATION VISION 2000: THE MARYLAND PLAN
STATEWIDE HISTORIC CONTEXTS**

I. GEOGRAPHIC REGION:

- X EASTERN SHORE (ALL EASTERN SHORE COUNTIES AND CECIL)
WESTERN SHORE (ANNE ARUNDEL, CALVERT, CHARLES, PRINCE GEORGE'S, ST. MARY'S)
PIEDMONT (BALTIMORE CITY, BALTIMORE, CARROLL, FREDERICK, HARFORD,, HOWARD,
MONTGOMERY)
WESTERN MARYLAND (ALLEGANY, GARRETT, WASHINGTON)**

II. CHRONOLOGICAL/DEVELOPMENTAL PERIODS:

- RURAL AGRARIAN INTENSIFICATION (A.D. 1680-1815)
AGRICULTURAL-INDUSTRIAL TRANSITION (A.D. 1815-1870)
X INDUSTRIAL/URBAN DOMINANCE (A.D. 1870-1930)
MODERN PERIOD (A.D. 1930-PRESENT)
UNKNOWN PERIOD (PREHISTORIC; HISTORIC)**

III. HISTORIC PERIOD THEMES:

- X AGRICULTURE
X ARCHITECTURE, LANDSCAPE, ARCHITECTURE, AND COMMUNITY PLANNING
ECONOMIC (COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL)
GOVERNMENT/LAW
MILITARY
RELIGION
SOCIAL/EDUCATIONAL/CULTURAL
TRANSPORTATION**

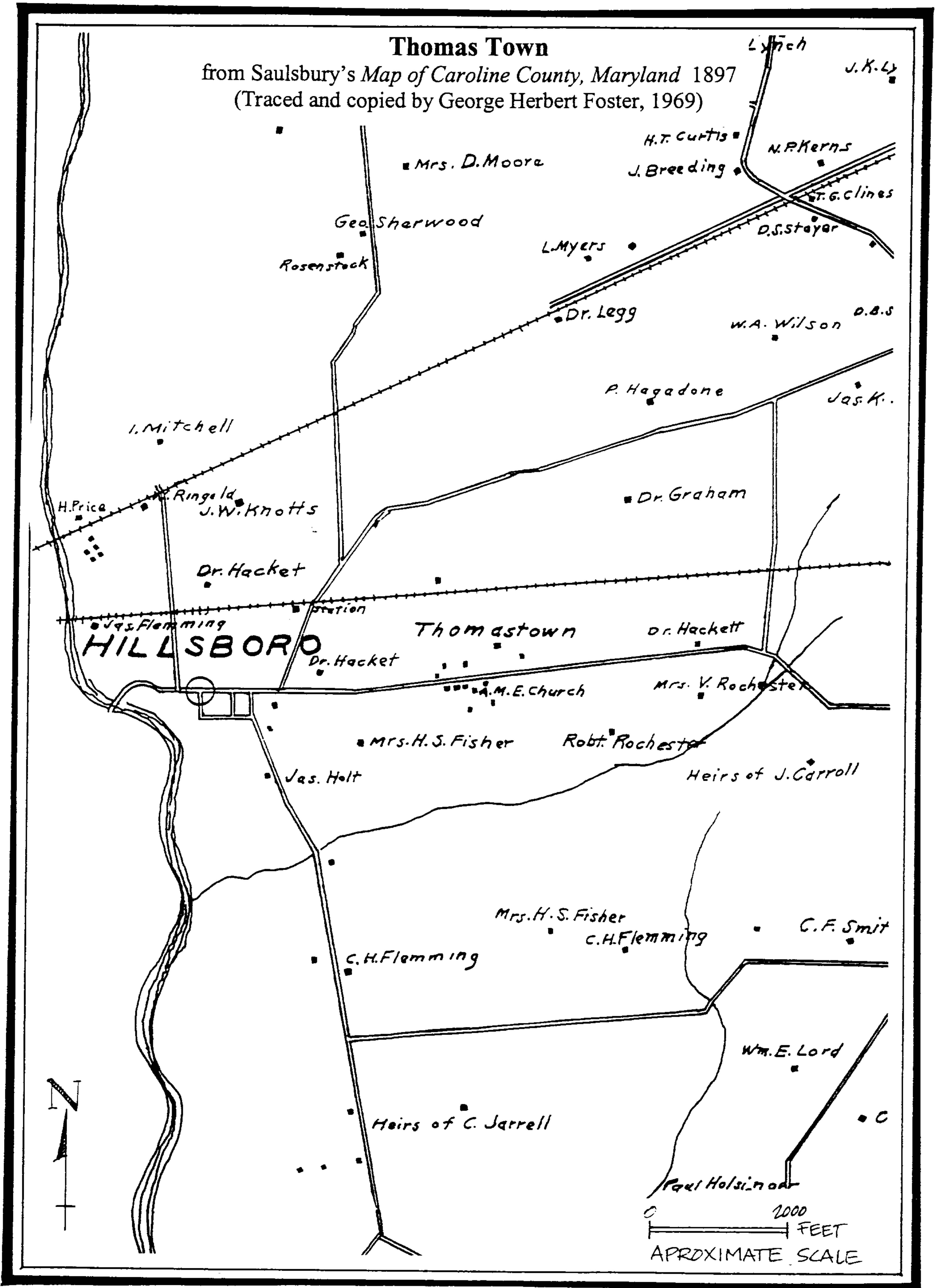
IV. RESOURCE TYPE:

CATEGORY: town

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT: rural

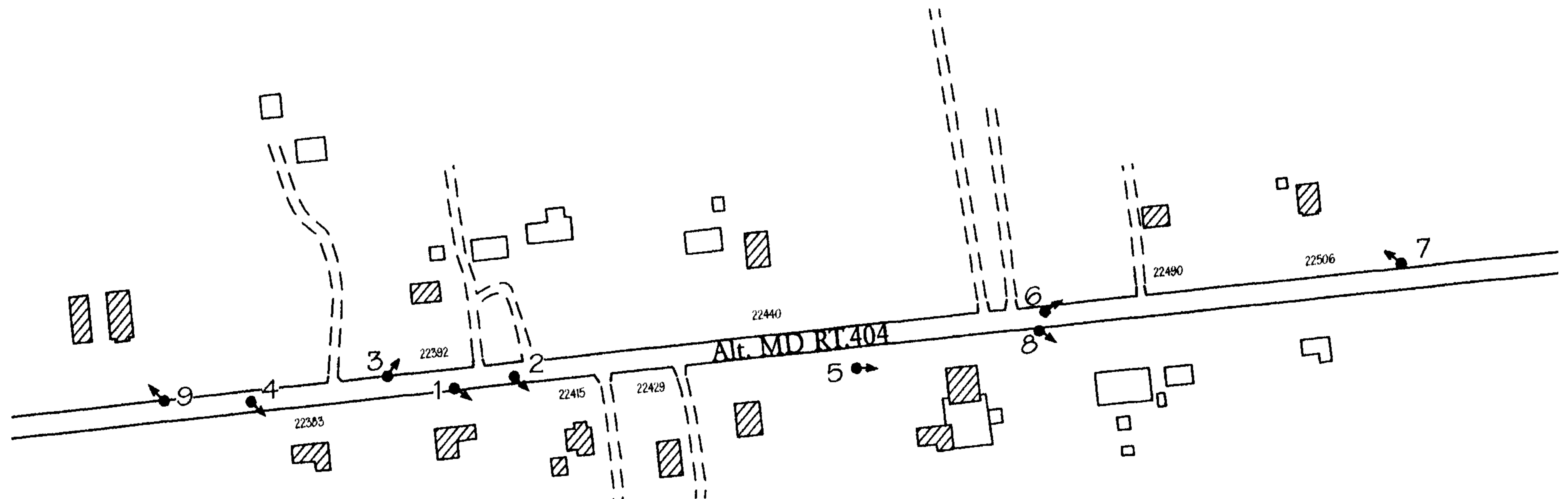
HISTORIC FUNCTION(S) AND USE(S): residential

KNOWN DESIGN SOURCE: none

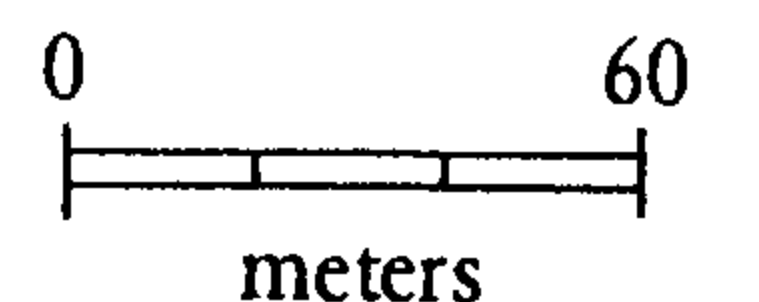
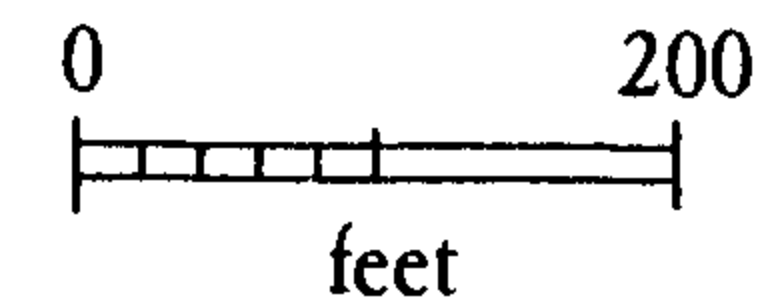


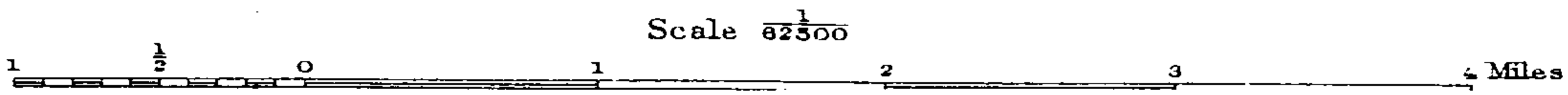
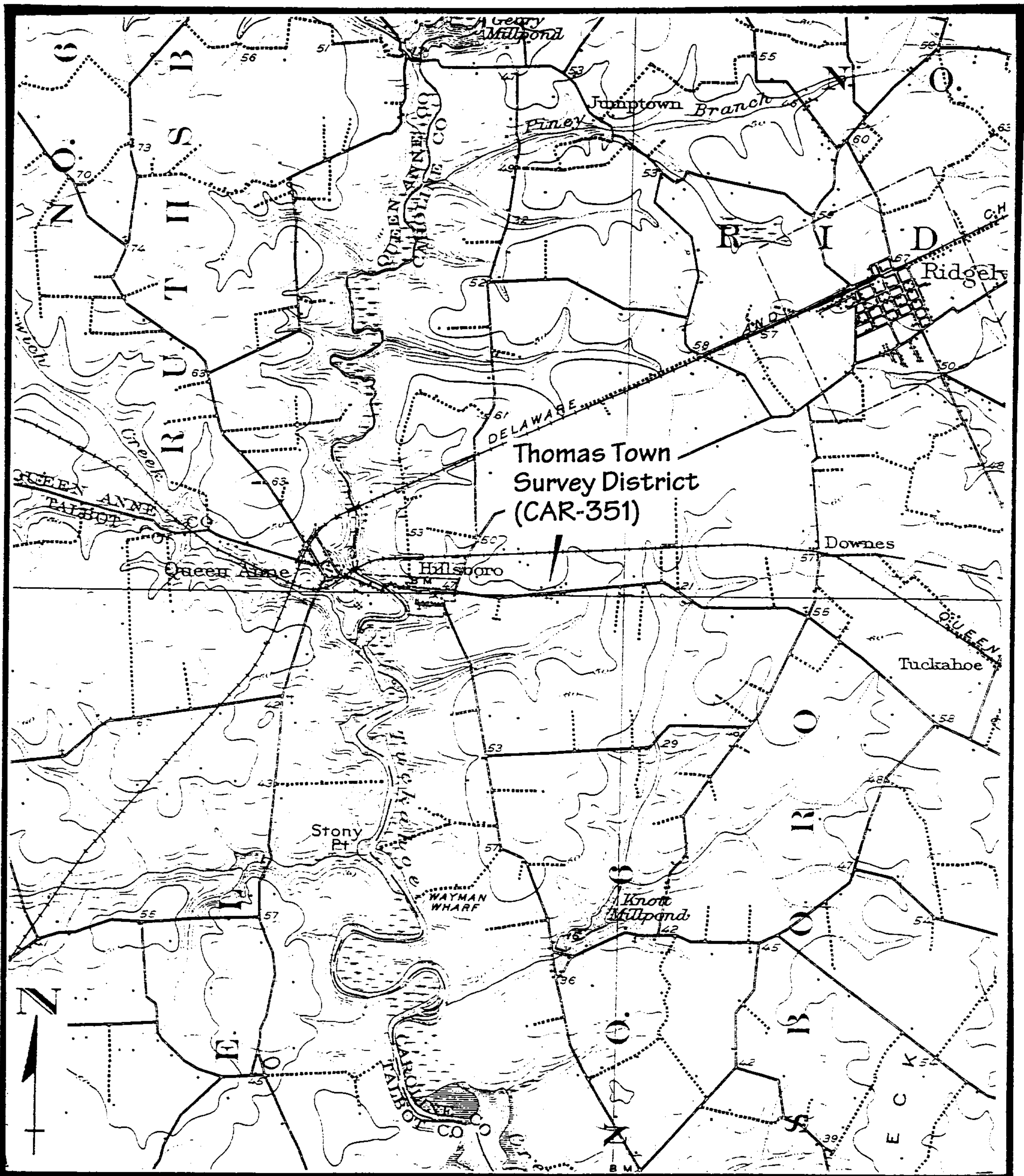
THOMAS TOWN SURVEY DISTRICT (CAR-351)

Thomas Town
Caroline County, Maryland
Resource Sketch Map



- ➔ = Photo Viewpoint
- ▨ = Historic Structures Contributing to Survey District
- 22017 = Street Address





Denton, Maryland 1905
USGS Quadrangle, 15-minute series.



CAR-351

Thomas Town Survey District
Caroline County, Maryland

Leslie Dyer

August 2001

MD SHPO

View southeast on Hillsboro Road, showing houses at 22411 and 22415
Hillsboro Road

1 of 9



CAR-351

Thomas Town Survey District

Caroline County, Maryland

Leslie Dyer

August 2001

MD SHPO

View Southeast on Hillsboro Road, showing a two-story house at 22415

Hillsboro Road

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CAR-351

Thomas Town Survey District

Caroline County, Maryland

Leslie Dyer

August 2001

MD-SHP0

View northeast from Hillsboro Road, showing residence at 22392

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Thomas Town Survey District

Caroline County, Maryland

Leslie Dyer

August 2001

MD SHPO

View southeast from Hillsboro Road, showing vacant house at 22383

Hillsboro Road

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CAR-351

Thomas Town Survey District

Caroline County, Maryland

Leslie Dyer

August 2001

MD SHPO

View east on Hillsboro Road, Allen A.M.E Church in foreground and
modern house at rear.

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CAR-351

Thomas Town Survey District

Caroline County, Maryland

Leslie Dyer

August 2001

MD 2001

View northeast from south side of Hillsboro Road, exhibiting an
older dwelling at 22490 Hillsboro Road.

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CAR-351

Thomas Town Survey District

Caroline County, Maryland

Leslie Dyer

August 2001

MD SHIPO

View of a one-story, front-gabled house at 22506 Hillsboro Road,
facing northwest.

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CAR-351

Thomas Town Survey District

Caroline County, Maryland

Leslie Dyer

August 2001

MD SHPO

View of two modern dwellings on the side of Hillsboro Road, facing
Southeast

8 of 9



CAR-351

Thomas Town Survey District
Caroline County, Maryland

Leslie Dyer

August 2001

MD SHPO

View of the United Church of Lord Jesus Christ, occupying a lot
on the western edge of Thomas Town, facing northwest

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